

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 485

October 11, 1995, 1:16 p.m.
Page S-14978 Temp. Record

JOB PROGRAMS REFORM/Job Corps

SUBJECT: Workforce Development Act of 1995 . . . S. 143. Specter/Simon amendment No. 2894 to the Kassebaum substitute amendment No. 2885.

ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 57-40

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 143, the Workforce Development Act of 1995, will replace more than 80 Federal workforce employment and workforce education programs with a single program. That program will provide 93 percent of the authorized funds to the States in grants with minimal Federal requirements.

The Kassebaum substitute amendment would make changes agreed to by the bill managers.

The Specter/Simon amendment would retain Federal administration of the Job Corps Program. Services would be linked to State training and employment services as created under this bill. Any program participant would be expelled for any drug use or violence. An evaluation of the program would be conducted, and the 10 worst centers would be closed. (The Job Corps program, which is currently funded at \$1.2 billion, operates as a residential program for "at-risk youth" to provide education and job training services. The bill will give the States primary responsibility for administering the Job Corps Program. It will provide a total of \$2.1 billion per year for fiscal years (FYs) 1998-2001 for the States to administer the Jobs Corp Program and other programs they may design to serve at-risk youth. The bill (and the Specter/Simon amendment) will define the term "at-risk youth" to mean an individual age 15 through age 24 who is poor and who meets at least one other listed risk criterion. The bill will also require an evaluation of Job Corps centers, and will require the closing of those 25 centers that receive the worst evaluations. Finally, States with centers will be required to continue providing Jobs Corps services through them using funds from the \$2.1 billion.)

Those favoring the amendment contended:

We commend the work of the Labor Committee in proposing the reforms in this bill of the Jobs Corp program. Many of the proposed reforms are more than praiseworthy--they are critically needed. However, the major proposed change--to make this a

(See other side)

YEAS (57)			NAYS (40)			NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (15 or 29%)	Democrats (42 or 93%)		Republicans (37 or 71%)	Democrats (3 or 7%)		Republicans (1)	Democrats (1)
Bennett	Akaka	Hollings	Abraham	Helms	Graham	Cohen- ⁴	Moynihan- ²
Burns	Baucus	Inouye	Ashcroft	Hutchison	Kerrey		
Campbell	Biden	Johnston	Bond	Jeffords	Nunn		
Cochran	Bingaman	Kennedy	Brown	Kassebaum			
Grassley	Boxer	Kerry	Chafee	Kempthorne			
Hatch	Bradley	Kohl	Coats	Kyl			
Hatfield	Breaux	Lautenberg	Coverdell	Lott			
Inhofe	Bryan	Leahy	Craig	Lugar			
Murkowski	Bumpers	Levin	D'Amato	Mack			
Santorum	Byrd	Lieberman	DeWine	McCain			
Shelby	Conrad	Mikulski	Dole	McConnell			
Snowe	Daschle	Moseley-Braun	Domenici	Nickles			
Specter	Dodd	Murray	Faircloth	Pressler			
Stevens	Dorgan	Pell	Frist	Roth			
Warner	Exon	Pryor	Gorton	Simpson			
	Feingold	Reid	Gramm	Smith			
	Feinstein	Robb	Grams	Thomas			
	Ford	Rockefeller	Gregg	Thompson			
	Glenn	Sarbanes		Thurmond			
	Harkin	Simon					
	Heflin	Wellstone					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

State-run program--is not acceptable. This program's structure and purpose make it a program which is better left under Federal control.

This program is the only one of its kind. It serves hard-core unemployed youth. These young men and women, ages 15-24, often are from broken homes in which no one has ever held a job. Their neighbors also do not have jobs, and they live in drug-infested, violent neighborhoods where they are subjected to intense peer pressure not to try to make something of their lives. The Job Corps program takes these young people off the streets and moves them, sometimes literally thousands of miles away from gangs, drugs, and violence, to clean, structured, positive environments. For many of these kids, the Job Corps is not their last chance--it is the only real chance they have ever had or ever will have.

The cost per program participant is undeniably high, but the results are impressive, considering the background of the participants. We admit that only 30 percent graduate, but we also note that we are dealing with participants 73 percent of whom have never before held jobs. Our colleagues may not like the fact that the Job Corps counts jobs gained by its dropouts in its statistics, but the fact that these dropouts are getting jobs, when they never before have held jobs, tells us that they gained from their Job Corps experience. For Senators who are interested in the bottom line, one comprehensive study in the 1980s found that every dollar invested in the program saves \$1.46 in future costs from crime and welfare.

For the past 30 years this program has retained a national focus. The goal is to help program participants no matter from what part of the country they come from. Centers do not serve local areas only; in fact, fully one-third of program participants are enrolled in centers outside of their home States. This program succeeds by taking a broader view, and by committing the type of intensive resources that are necessary to turn around the lives of young people who come from desperate circumstances.

This bill will end that national focus. Instead of having a single, unified, national approach, each State will be free to design its own approach. States with fewer centers will suddenly find a shortage of services for their needy youth, as those States with more space selfishly reserve it for their own citizens. Other States that do not want to commit the resources to this expensive program may slash funding, in order to fund programs for other, less needy people. Many more people can be found jobs if States concentrate on finding jobs for those people who need less intensive help. Our fear is that giving the States control over the Job Corps will result in many States simply writing off this program, and these needy kids.

The Specter/Simon amendment would therefore reject State control. However, it would retain the provisions in the bill to reduce the level of violence and to monitor the program's performance, and it would adopt (though at a lower level) the proposal to eliminate those centers which ran the most poorly. We hope our colleagues recognize that Federal control of this program is preferable, and that they will join us in voting in favor of this amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

The Job Corps Program is riddled with extremely serious problems. A few Job Corps centers may be operating well, but they are the exception rather than the rule. This program is ineffective, expensive, and downright dangerous for participants.

For years, the Job Corps has made the false claim that it places 80 percent of its participants in jobs, the military, or in higher education. For years, we accepted this claim without examination, which is a failing that some of our colleagues still apparently have. In recent years, though, the Department of Labor Inspector General has conducted several audits which have disclosed the following: the cost per participant is \$23,000; one-third of all participants drop out within 90 days; 50 percent of all participants drop out within 6 months; the Job Corps counts in its job-placement statistics those jobs that are found by participants by themselves after they drop out of the program; the Job Corps counts anyone who works 20 hours or more in its placement statistics; and only 12 percent of those participants who gained employment needed the skills they had been taught in the program. Similarly, the General Accounting Office (GAO), in a study of 2,500 students at 6 centers that was released last June, found the following: 70 percent of the students dropped out before completing the program; of the 30 percent who graduated, two-thirds did not find employment or found a low-paying job that did not use the skills they had learned; and half of the students who found jobs lasted for less than 2 months on those jobs. The studies are consistent: this expensive program is failing in its mission.

Both the GAO and the Inspector General have also uncovered severe problems with the contracting practices used under this program. Employers and unions are given contracts without competitive bidding to provide training. According to the GAO and the Inspector General, program participants who receive this training do even worse than other applicants. The Labor Inspector General has also detailed some of the more questionable uses that contractors have found for contract funds, such as \$100,000 for liquor and dry cleaning bills and \$500,000 for an office in Tokyo.

Another disturbing aspect of many Job Corps centers is that they are extremely dangerous places to be. We held a hearing in October of 1994 at which Job Corps officials assured us that reports of violence were greatly exaggerated. In December of 1994, though, the Job Corps released statistics that did not sound like exaggerations to us. According to those statistics, between 1992 and 1994, there were 933 incidents of violence, 416 serious drug-related incidents, 300 sexual assaults, and 23 murders at centers. Though the Job Corps is directed by statute not to accept applicants who may be disruptive, it also accepted 4,520 students with criminal records and 9,678 students with a history of psychological or emotional problems. Due to these statistics, the Labor Committee held another hearing this January on violence at the centers. Days before the hearing, a 19-year-old girl was murdered by three other Job

OCTOBER 11, 1995**VOTE NO. 485**

Corps students at the Knoxville Job Corps center in what police described as a "ritualistic" murder. The testimony we heard of the rampant drug use and of the extreme violence that routinely went unreported and unpunished at centers was shocking. As a result of those hearings, the Department of Labor promised to enforce a "one-strike-and-your-out" policy for drug and violence offenses, but we are sorry to say that the problem has not been solved. We know, for instance, that 6 weeks ago a Job Corps student in Oklahoma was murdered by two of his classmates. As one Job Corps recruiter wrote to us, "I could not morally, ethically, or consciously send my friend's children and community members of Northeastern Wisconsin to these (Job Corps) centers and expect them not to be harmed physically and emotionally . . .".

We recognize that not all Job Corps centers are unsafe, and we also recognize that there are some reputable contractors running them. However, we are certain that many centers are so bad that fixing them would drain so many resources from good centers that it would be counter-productive. Accordingly, in this bill we have proposed closing the 25 worst centers. The States will then be responsible for running the remaining centers. They will, in fact, be required to run those centers--the operative word in the bill language is "shall". How they will do it will be up to them. Based on the statistics we have quoted above, we do not see how they could do worse, though we of course expect they will do much better. States understand local needs, they know the local business community, and they know the job skills that are needed. We are certain that they will not busily train these kids in construction trades that are fast disappearing, as the Federal Government currently spends most of its time doing. If a State does find that committing less resources to a center is less productive than committing them to other programs for at-risk youth, we have no problem with them moving those resources. This bill will authorize \$2.1 billion for at-risk youth; those funds, if not spent on the Job Corps Program, will have to be spent on similar programs.

The Federal Government has roles which it can fill better than can State and local governments. Training unemployed youth to fit into local work environments is not one of those roles. We urge our colleagues to recognize this fact, to trust the States, and to therefore vote to defeat this amendment.

Argument 2:

We agree with those of our colleagues who say that the Job Corps has done an admirable job over the years with at-risk youth. However, we also agree with those Senators who say that giving the States control over the program will make it better. To be effective, job training has to be responsive to the needs of each individual community. Without close community involvement, the result is often training in unnecessary skills. States know their local communities better than the Federal Government does. Another reason for giving this issue to the States is to prevent a bifurcation of job training. If the Federal Government retains control, the States will view the training of at-risk youth as a Federal issue, and will ignore these youth in their own training programs. Senators should keep in mind that the Federal Job Corps effort covers only a small portion of the youth who need help. Thus, retaining Federal control of the Job Corps Program will likely result in most at-risk youth receiving no help at all. We strongly support the Job Corps, but we believe this amendment is misguided, and will vote to defeat it.